ON THE ORIGIN AND PROGRESS OF CHURCH ARCHITECTURE.

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Reverting to the era of Theodosius (A.D. 379 to 394) as that of the permanent though really the second period of Church Architecture, we find that the *debris* of heathen temples, as well as the materials of the ruinous basilicas of Constantine, were converted to the purposes of church building. The body of these early churches was preceded by a portion of insulated columns, serving to harbour catechumens and penitents who were not permitted to enter the body of the edifice. In very early times, says Hope (forming his opinion from a mosaic existing in St. Apollonaire-di-dentro, at Ravenna), the portico, or *narthex*, is said to have been screened from the court all by curtains hung on rods; it gave entrance to the nave, bounded by ranges of columns *taken from the heathen temples*, often differing in size, materials, and workmanship, reduced or raised to uniformity, as the case might require; on the columns of the nave was raised a wall, the upper part perforated, and which supported the beams and rafters of the central roof. The body of these first Christian churches, with the exception of their antique columns, had not a single member or moulding projecting from the flat perpendicular surface. The sanctuary was separated from the nave, not only by cancelli or rails (whence chancel), but also a curtain, withdrawn only during a part of the service; in this part was the absis, or concha. A division of the nave, near its upper end, was raised by a few steps for the reception of the minor clergy and singers; on the same line rose two marble pulpits, that on the right for reading the scriptures, and on the left for reading the epistles, the former flanked by the small marble pillar on which was placed the paschal candle. The nave and aisles of the true basilica abutted against a transverse wall which, through a vast central arch opposite the former, and lesser lateral arches opposite each of the latter, gave entrance into the transept, and that part which composed the sanctuary; and the central arch leading to and from the very entrance of the nave, shewed beyond it the sanctuary, the tomb of the martyr to whom the church was dedicated, the altar over that tomb, and the crucifix and trophies of the triumph of Christianity.

Such is a very near and consistent description of the first structures devoted, or dedicated, to Christian worship; derived either from remains casually brought to light or from existing examples which have escaped the hand of time. We have seen that in the early ages, the meek and persecuted sufferers for Christ's sake disputed not upon the form or materials of the temple; the little less than miracle of the wide diffusion of their faith burst upon them, and they marvelled rather than repined when the walls of the pagan hall reverberated the hymn of praise and thanksgiving; neither disputed they even upon the presence of heathen emblems in the temple; those of the vintage, and of harvest, typical of divine beneficence in the recurrence of those seasons, were still revered; they were gladdened in a general ackoowledgment of the efficacy of the one great sacrifice for human redemption.

Undoubtedly, then, the first Christian churches were built after classic or pagan (the term is optional and unimportant) models, and the convenience of these forms is still recognized in designs for ecclesiastical structures of the largest class. While we admire ability in discussion, and can appreciate laborious research, the time has gone by for reference to the older architectural works for purposes other than ascertaining the standard or governing proportions of the classic styles, and the gratification of a laudable curiosity on points of minor interest; puerile adaptations from the Italian schools of architecture have already inflicted extensive and lasting mischief; for while the conception of grandeur and fitness exemplified in the Roman basilica, and preserved in the Christian temple, has never been exceeded, mongrel admixtures, all professing to be derived from *authority*, have been suffered to debase British architecture of every class.

Many of our readers may not be aware that the term "Christian," as applied to Gothic architecture, originated with Mr. Britton, the indefatigable and respected illustrator of our cathedrals; the consistent uses of it, which promised to be of much value, are thus clearly and elegantly pointed out by the talented writer of the article "Civil Architecture" in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. "Mr. Britton, than whom perhaps no man possesses an equal right to affix an appellation to the pointed arch style, from the splendid services he has done in the publication of his cathedral and architectural antiquities, wishes to introduce a term which is not at all unlikely to succeed, as it is equally appropriate and independent of national feeling and hypothetic origin. *He calls it Christian architecture.* This is a generic term, and admits each nation to distinguish its own species or style. It accords also with the usual distinctions of Grecian architecture, as Dorian, Ionian, and Corinthian, for each nation has its peculiarity of Gothic. The term 'Christian' applies well to Gothic architecture, that which arose on the extinction of the Roman architecture, and was again subverted by the introduction of the pointed arch, and which owed its introduction and progress to the Christian religion." More need not be said upon the intention with which Mr. Britton applied the term, or the better uses of which it is susceptible; certainly that distinguished antiquary had no idea that he was thus opening a door to controversy, or that fallacious distinctions would be urged upon points where the better informed are necessarily unanimous. The Roman manner, or style, was preserved, acknowledged, and even boasted of by Christian architects for centuries; the perversion of the term "Christian" to an exclusion of the title of classic architecture to that appellation is therefore too ridiculous to be further entertained.

It may be interesting to those who have had an eye to the cavil which has rather insidiously stolen upon us, that we should proceed with the grounds for these conclusions. Rome, in the last years of her glory, while ceding her provinces, and awaiting the crisis of her political fate, nourished the germs of her future ecclesiastical supremacy; Christianity flourished, and the capture of the imperial city by the mixed hordes of Alaric, in 410, seems to have been, as it were, a gathering of many nations, whose subsequent divergence carried both a knowledge and the spirit of religion to the extremities of Europe. In the former dependencies of the empire, and in Rome itself, the conquerors, once assured of the stability of their dominion, became patrons of the arts, and introduced the highly ornate, yet rude and ill-designed style of sculpture, of which tolerably well preserved remains still exist in several of the Lombardic capitals. But to confine our historical recollections chiefly to British church building; there is satisfactory evidence that sacred edifices existed prior to the Saxon occupation; and, indeed, the birth-place of Constantine would scarcely be omitted in his rescripts to the provinces, commanding the erection and repair of churches. The Saxons were more accustomed and attached to timber buildings, and until the era of the Heptarchy would probably have done little in the way of more permanent erections. Britain, however, partook largely in the spread of Christianity, and several of the Saxon kings became munificent patrons of church building and endowment; from this period we begin to catch glimpses of tangible historical facts. Bede, who flourished and wrote in the seventh century, cites the mission of Naitan, king of the Picts, soliciting the Abbot Ceolfrid to send him architects to build a church after the Roman manner. Edwin, the first Christian king of Northumberland, built in 672 his church at York, under the direction of Paulinus, a missionary from Rome. St. Wilfred, who in 674 built the church of Hexham, Northumberland, and the church of Ripon, had himself learned architecture at Rome, and brought with him artificers from that city. St. Benedict, who built the monastery of Wearmouth, likewise procured workmen from abroad, and built his church *more Romano*. Alfred imported artists, who built the churches of his time *more Romano*. In fact, the whole history of church building of that period is of the same description, and those works at large were designated "Opus Romanum."

Rude imitations of classic architecture are thus known to have pervaded the land; rude in proportion to the distance and infrequency of communication with the seat of civilization; rude in proportion to the unfitness of the material architects were frequently compelled to employ, and the unpractised condition of the native workman; in all remains decided, or rather conjectured, to be of Saxon origin. Massiveness is the prevailing feature; hence the low cylindrical, square, or bevelled pier; or pillars with bases and capitals often fantastically carved, surmounted by heavy semi-circular arches springing directly from their tops. After the Heptarchy, and during the Danish incursions, churches and churchmen suffered in the largest degree; the Northmen, the fiercest and most prejudiced of the Pagan tribes, waged against them a war of extermination, which the older chroniclers describe and lament at some length; architecture retrograded, and it was not until about the middle of the tenth century that a revival of any importance took place, which was ushered in by the founding of the noble abbey church of Romsey, and a little later (980) Bishop Ethelwold built the crypts of the Cathedral of Winchester.

We now approach the period of the Norman Conquest, and with it came renewed and active progress both in ecclesiastical and castellated architecture. The churchmen, members of the family of the Conqueror were inducted to the richest benefices, and generally the Saxon clergy were deprived and replaced by Normans; numerous cathedrals were now set on foot, yet, in all the original features common to Saxon and Norman builders were continued; save only that the progress of society had induced ideas of superior magnificence, which were presently to be realized by the uncontrolled and unresisted appropriation of the resources of a prostrate country. In this movement Gondulph, the Norman Bishop of Rochester, took the lead, and at once carried the style to its maximum in dimensions and decoration. The true Norman, together with what is called the semi-Norman period, occupy little more than a century, or from 1066 till towards the last years of the twelfth century.

Having thus passed the line of demarcation usually recognised by ecclesiologists, we enter upon debatable ground, the early English period, introducing various modifications of the circular arch, and terminating in pointed or lancet-shaped Gothic, to which the term "Christian" has also been erroneously deemed exclusively to apply. A masterly and, to our mind, acceptable elucidation of the principal points at issue on the former and current designation of this style is given in the volume previously quoted, in effect as follows;

The Gothic style originated in imitations of the churches of the metropolis of Christianity, and not from any previously existing examples among the northern nations. The Celtic monuments were the only specimens they possessed; the general forms and modes of Roman architecture may be traced throughout, and the Gothic is more clearly deducible from that origin than Roman is from Greek, or Greek from Egyptian. Degrees of perfection were consequent upon habits, manners, and advancement towards civilization; and much depended upon direct communication with Rome itself. It may be called Gothic, as in a great measure induced by Gothic invasions of the Imperial territory, and as more commonly practised by the nations to whom the term Gothic may be properly applied. It has been well observed that of all the nations claiming to have originated the Gothic style, none can produce genuine specimens before a certain period, and to which their histories distinctly refer. Now, if it had been invented by any of the European nations, that one would certainly have been able to shew specimens of it of a date anterior to some of the others, but that is not the case. The perfect lancet arch came into use immediately after the period of the first crusade; nothing approaching it was previously attempted in Europe, although it already existed in the East. It is also indisputable that the Saracenic and Mahometan nations do, and have used the pointed arch, but they were never until lately known to adopt any European custom or invention. The pointed arch was a graft upon the Gothic arch of Northern Europe, as the circular arch of the Romans had been upon the columnar ordi-

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